

# The Involvement of Student Leaders in the Governance of University:

## *An Implication of Shared Leadership*

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine how student leaders are involved in decision-making in the university. The study explores their participation in the decision making, their roles and what value they add to the university and to themselves in the process of their engagement.

Olsen's, Model of the university organization and governance was used in this study as a conceptual framework to create an understanding of how student leaders can contribute in the decision-making in the university.

The study adopted a qualitative method in a case study of Kenyatta University in Kenya. Data was collected through use of semi-structured interviews, document analysis and field notes. Six student leaders were interviewed.

The research findings indicated that student leaders were involved in decision making in the university through participation in the various boards and departmental committees. Students as stakeholders in the university should have a say on issues affecting them. It was found that there was satisfaction among the student leaders when their ideas were implemented though after a bit of drag and delay. It was also found that by involving the student leaders, they form a link between the student body and the university administrators. This leads to peaceful co-existence in the university. The student leaders therefore are the voice of the students in the committees where they are members. Most of the decisions the students made had to be vetted by the university authorities as they were seen to lack qualification to have a final say on decisions made in the university. Lack of adequate consultation between the student leaders and the university administrators can lead to frequent student revolts. In KU some calmness had been restored as there was good consultation on both ends.

It was also found that, students were concerned about the quality of the knowledge transmitted to them; as such KU has introduced many programs which in turn have attracted many self sponsored students.

Through involvement in the governance, the student leaders gain self-concept and divergent thinking. The skills they acquire enable them to fit into the bigger society. It is therefore important for the university administrators to give the student leaders adequate opportunity to play their roles in the university governance.

## **Dedications**

To Joan Angie Obiero. You will always be special!

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## **List of Abbreviations**

CCDP	CENTER FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMENT
CEO	CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS
HE	HIGHER EDUCATION
HEi	HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
JAB	JOINT ADMISSION BOARD
KU	KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
KUSA	KENYATTA UNIVERSITY STUDENT ASSOCIATION
KUSAAMC	KUSA ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction and aim of the study

There is a pervasive, shared, global perception of governance as a topic far broader than government, the governance approach is seen as a new process of governing, or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed (Stoker, 1998, p.177). For very long time institutional governance has been a top-down model. This has now been abandoned in favor of a more democratic and participatory models. This is based on the notion of shared leadership. Shared governance does not associate leadership with the effort of one individual as in the traditional theories (Goleman, 2002, Harris, 2004). It focuses rather on a new concept of governance where responsibilities and activities are distributed across a wide range of people within each specific context, Lumbly (2003 p.283). Shared leadership involves different units working together to achieve a common goal. Shared leadership can successfully be implemented if the stakeholders such as students and teaching staff are willing to abandon traditional governance models and subscribe to more participative approaches to management.

Some studies have indicated the benefits of involving students in the running of the university. The rationale for effective participation is that students will find it easier to accept decisions whose making, their representatives have had a chance in, as intimate and controlling participants. They are more likely to understand the motives for an otherwise objectionable policy and to appreciate that the motives were not malicious, even of mistakes. Participation of students in governance of their university facilitates their introduction to democratic ideals and practices. It also proposed that students as consumers of education are entitled to participatory rights in managerial processes and practices at the institutions, (McGrath, 1970, cited in Maria M, 2005). Okello, 1998 cited in Obondo, 2000, p. 5, observes that if students are involved in making decisions about salient issues concerning their lives, they are likely to identify with outcomes of such processes and colleges with institutionalized participation experience less student related administrative problems. If governance is shared then students feel more positive towards college goals and objectives, (Obondo, 2000). Obondo further asserts that in the transformation of universities the students should be involved. Student association represents an important untapped resource in university effort to

confront the current crises. Student representatives have also been noted to have the capacity to diffuse potential conflicts. This, they can do through regular meetings with their members and administration, designing mechanism for regular communication, thereby restraining their colleagues from unnecessary conflicts, (Obondo, 2002).

Wood, (1993) carried out a study in three colleges about faculty, student and support staff participation in the governance, he found out that these group constituted valuable sources of information on decisions. Respondents were found to be positive about student participation and capable of making significant contribution to quality of decisions (Zuo & Ratsg, 1999; Menon, 2005). However he further argued against the fact that the student may not be in a position to effectively represent the interest of their groups if they have no place in university boards. This would just promote the interest of a specific group which may lead to conflicts.

This study did not take the whole student body; focus was only on the student leaders. The main aim of this study was to investigate the involvement of student leaders in the governance of university as a shared leadership.

## **1.2 Structure of Kenyatta University Student Association**

The Kenyatta University Student Association was established in 1995. All registered students are entitled to join the association. The association was formed so as to take into consideration the needs and views of the students. However the student unions were banned due to the uprisings for multiparty democracy in Kenya in the late 90s which saw the involvement of university student leaders. It is now seven years since the re-establishment KUSA with an aim of being involved in matters affecting the students within the university.

The Association is run by an executive body, and a congress made up of students elected through democratically run election. The association represents all the students of KU.

### **1.2.1 The Congress**

The congress is made up of the Executive Council, ordinary members elected in accordance with Article 12, ordinary members nominated in accordance with Article 13 and ex-officio member in accordance with Article 16, section 1 (a).<sup>1</sup> (KUSA, Constitution 2011).

### **1.2.2 The Executive Council**

The Executive consists of the President, Vice-president, Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Finance secretary, Academic Secretary, Organizing Secretary, Gender and Social Welfare Secretary, Special Needs Secretary, Chairperson of each of the satellite campuses, unless as specified in article 13(7) representative of Institution-Based and Open-learning Students, the Speaker of the Congress as ex officio member. The Executive is the main decision maker in the student association.

## **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The governance of the university has not been smooth since its inception all over the world. Of late university management or administration has gone through transformation to give recognition to all actors involved in its existence. KU as any other university in the world have found out that “it is simply no longer viable to run a system from one national control centre...” de Boer, H and Goedegebuure, (2003). The introduction of the New Public Management introduced into university administration recognized the claims other concerned people make about higher education. The university is comprised of various constituencies such as the administrators, the teaching and non-teaching staff, faculty and the students, who interact in everyday activities of the university. But their voices we find that are not usually heard at the same level. This assertion indicates that student involvement in the governance of the university is very important. The decision-making organs of the university should include all stakeholders especially the students. This is referred to as the stakeholder society, de Boer H and Goedegebuure, (2003), Enders, (2002), Neave, (2002); Van der Wende, (2002).

The new system has also been adopted by KU, students are being given an opportunity to have a say in the decision made about them. In the previous years KU had had volatile student protests but of late there has been a climate of calmness and minimal interruptions. It is

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<sup>1</sup> KUSA Constitution, 2011

against this background that this study investigates how the student leaders are involved in the governance of Kenyatta University.

The study therefore investigated the ways in which the student leaders are involved in the governance of KU, the role they play and the value of their involvement.

## **1.4 Research Question**

To investigate the research problem and achieve the purpose of the study the main question was formulated as follows:

### ***How are student leaders involved in the governance of Kenyatta University?***

The guiding questions were as follows:

1. How do student leaders participate in decision making in Kenyatta University?
2. What is the role of student leaders' in the governance of Kenyatta University?
3. What are the benefits of involving student leaders in the governance of Kenyatta University?

This study is of significance in that students form a big body in the university and without them the university would not serve its purpose. Through their participation they can therefore learn ways in which they can present issues affecting them. It is hoped that findings from this study will lead to increased student participation in the decision making in the universities, thereby reducing the conflicts between the administrators and the students. It is also hoped that this will contribute to the better ways of governing the universities through student involvement especially in Kenya.

In any kind of study there are usually factors that impede the achievement of the set goals. This study is no exception. Time factor being one, to a great extent led to some draw backs, the field work was carried during a six week period. I spent the first two weeks going through the university protocol to get access to carry out the study. I carried out the interviews for three weeks as each student leader was available on different days. It was also the beginning

of the semester so the student leaders were involved in many university and personal activities that it took a bit of time to settle for the interviews.

This thesis has seven chapters. Chapter one comprises of an introduction, the statement of the problem, justification of the study and ends with the structure of the thesis. Chapter two presents information about Kenya and the basic information about Kenyatta University.

Chapter three consists of on the analytical framework; the first section looks at the concept of governance in relation to Olsen's Four Steering Models of university governance and organization. The second section consists of the literature review, related literature is examined so as to give an over view of information which is available on the topic of the study.

Chapter four contains the approach, choice of the design, informants, instruments, procedure for data collection. Ethical issues as well as issues related to validity and reliability of the study are discussed.

Chapter five involves data presentation and analysis of the findings in relation to the study questions. Chapter six is discusses the findings based on each of the research questions. Chapter seven is on the study conclusion, reflection of the theoretical framework, implication of the study further rearsch.

## 2 CONTEXT

### 2.1 Introduction

The development of HE in Kenya is not the purpose of this study. However it is important to review the historical and present features so as to understand the dynamics of the sector in the country.

### 2.2 Map of Kenya



Figure 1. Map of Kenya<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [http:// Map of World.com/ Kenya/maps/Kenya-map. Jpg](http://MapofWorld.com/Kenya/maps/Kenya-map.Jpg). Retrieved on 19th march 2012



## 2.3 Basic information about Kenya

Kenya is one of the East African countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa. It borders Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Indian Ocean. Kenya was one of the British Colonies in the 19th centuries until it became independent in 1963. A year later in 1964 it became a republic. Kenya is a sovereign multi-party democracy state under an executive president. The president is the head of the state. The country has had three presidents since independence: Jomo Kenyatta, 1963-1978. Daniel Arap Moi, 1978-2002, Mwai Kibaki, 2003 to date. Kenya is currently a multi-party-democracy state following nearly forty years of one-party authoritarianism that affected all public institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Currently Kenya is governed under the constitution of 2010, but the present government was elected under the previous charter.<sup>4</sup> Administratively the country is divided into eight provinces. Under the new constitution, the president will be the head of state and government, there will be a bicameral legislature and the country divided into 47 counties.

Kenya covers a surface area of about 580,000 Sq.km, and a population of about 37.7 million, with the capital city Nairobi serving as a home to an estimated over three million inhabitant. 43% of the total population is below the age 15. The population growth rate is estimated at 2.9% as per 2010.<sup>5</sup> English is the official language with Kiswahili as the national language. This is in addition to about 42 languages spoken by each of the 42 ethnic groups in the country.

Kenya has the largest economy compared to member states of the East African community.<sup>6</sup> This is due to Kenya's colonial history, which has resulted in a more industrial sector. Much of Kenya's population depends on farming for a living, though only 15% of the total land has

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<sup>3</sup> The President was the Chancellor of all the public universities and was the one responsible for appointing and firing the vice-chancellors, who in most cases were not academically capable but were politically loyal to the system within the academic staff (Ole.M. A et al, 2011)

<sup>4</sup> [www.answers.com/topic/kenya](http://www.answers.com/topic/kenya). The new Constitution had not been passed

<sup>5</sup> [www.ncpad.ke-org](http://www.ncpad.ke-org)

<sup>6</sup> The countries Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi form East African Community

sufficient fertility and rainfall.<sup>7</sup> The industrial development also focuses on processing agricultural products. However service industry is also a major contributor.

## **2.4 Higher Education in Kenya**

In Kenya the tertiary education sub-sector is comprised of 24 universities (7 public and 17 private), 4 non-university polytechnics and numerous other types of private universities, (6) are dully chartered (11) operate with letters of Interim Authority and the others have been issued with certificates of Registration. In addition to universities and polytechnics, the tertiary system contains a number of teacher training colleges, institutes of science and technology, government owned and supported medical training colleges and trade and agricultural institutions, providing three-year vocational training at Diploma and two-year certificate courses. This is in addition to numerous private commercial colleges.

The history of higher education in Kenya can be traced back to 1956 when the University of Nairobi was established as the Royal Technical College of East Africa in affiliation with University of London. It was the first higher education institution in Kenya. In 1958 the college was upgraded into the second international university in East Africa before being renamed The Royal College of Nairobi and later upgraded into university college in 1961. At Kenya's independence in 1963, The Royal College became the University College of Nairobi and joined the Makerere College in Uganda and Dar es Salaam College in Tanzania to form the University of East Africa. However due to the nationalist pressure from Kenya and Tanzania, the University of East Africa was dissolved in 1970 with each of the three countries (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) establishing their own national universities under their respective Acts of Parliament. The University College of Nairobi became to be known as University of Nairobi (UON). It has since grown to be the largest university in Eastern and Central Africa with over 30,000 students (Mwiria et. al, 2007). From then on the government has established six other public universities. Currently there is massive expansion to uplift other middle level colleges to universities status. This has been occasioned by the increased number of students join the university through the Joint Admissions Board or the self-sponsored students.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/economy\\_of\\_kenya](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/economy_of_kenya)

<i>University</i>	<i>Year established</i>
Moi University	1985
Kenyatta University	1985
Egerton University	1987
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology	1994
Maseno University	2000
MasindeMuliro University of Science and Technology	2007

Table 1. State Universities and year of establishment

The most salient feature of university education in Kenya has been the rapid growth of the number of institutions and enrolments. The number of public universities increased from one in 1970 to seven in 2005 with a student population of about 80,000 including the self-sponsored students.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of some private institutions. With the exception of some institutions such as the United States International University (USIU), most private universities in Kenya are religiously controlled. These institutions are also limited in capacity with a total student enrolment ranging between 500 in the smallest institutions to 2000 in the largest.

## **2.5 Governance of Universities in Kenya**

Governance is very important for the success of any institution, be it small or big. It involves the recruitment of the individuals managing the higher education institutions and determines relevance and whether management structures are more or less open. In Kenya for a very long time the Chancellor for all the public universities was the head of state, who in turn appointed the vice-chancellors. This meant the government played a key role in the decision-making of the affairs of the public universities.

With the coming of a new government in 2003, there have been some reforms in the running of the public universities and currently each university has its own Chancellor and the appointment of the vice-chancellors is done through competitive bidding (Mwiria et. al, 2007). However, the government has very minimal interference in the running of the private universities apart from the role of Commission of Higher Education (CHE) of awarding charters and letters of interim authority. Governance therefore extends beyond the authority of a single person and can be explained and defined as a partnership among group members, and hence the essence of governance is not the leader but the relationship existing between the leader and his followers. (Rost, 1993).

The development of new model of university has altered the governance structures within institutions and the role of academicians have been affected (Frew cited in Rubanju, 2008). He argues that international and national changes have affected the internal governance of universities and influenced the role of the stakeholder. Academic autonomy and freedom should therefore be maintained despite the change from collegial decision-making to executive governance.

Student governance is needed in the area of reform because higher education in Kenya has been the subject of much political manipulation and intervention. This has contributed to the numerous strikes and closures over the past decade, prolonging the time required for graduation, disrupting academic life and driving prospective students and staff to private and overseas institutions. (Mwiria et al, 2007).

The main concern of the universities should be efficiency and productivity in the process of governance. In order to effect democratization of higher education management in Kenya, existing organizational structures, their composition, operational rules and procedures have to

be modified in consistent with the demand for all inclusive approach to academic administration (Obondo, 2000). Obondo also argues that democratization of decision making is important not only because many conflicts arise from such unequal power relationship, but also because universities are advocates of democratic institutions, and should therefore practice what they preach. For democracy to prevail, student leaders could be given more representation in the governing bodies, and strengthening of the student associations.

It is important for power and authority to be shared and distributed fairly and decentralized effectively among all the dominant groups within the campus community. Currently in both public and private universities democratization of decision-making within the universities has been enhanced by promoting wider representation of staff and students in key university governing body and by allowing the staff a greater say in selecting senior university administrators.

University governance arrangements vary widely, not only among countries but also among institution within the same country. As a result it is extremely difficult to say that a particular practice is a representation of a country, except where national frame work for higher education legislation sets uniform provision for all institutions.

## **2.6 Background of Kenyatta University**

Kenyatta University is situated along Nairobi/Thika Road, about 23 kilometers from Nairobi city. It was previously a military barrack known as Templer Barracks. It was converted into a teachers' college (Kenyatta College) in 1965. It became a constituent college of the University of Nairobi in 1970, training mainly teachers. It achieved university status when the Kenyatta University Act received Presidential assent in 1985. This made it a full fledged university and was renamed Kenyatta University.

The university currently has 14 schools and it offers degree courses in physical sciences, social sciences, business studies and environmental sciences. Kenyatta University is renowned for its programme in education for which it is considered the leading in Eastern and Central Africa (Mwiria et al., 2007). Kenyatta University currently has the highest number of programs; most are given both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Diploma courses are also being offered by some departments. The university has open-learning, e-learning, school-based, part-time and full-time teaching. This has led to it being the second largest

institution of higher learning in Kenya (population of about 30,000 students) after Nairobi University. Currently it has six campuses and constituent colleges.

### **2.6.1 Administrative structure of Kenyatta University**

Kenyatta University is governed by the Senate. The university senate includes the following members: At the helm is The Vice-chancellor , who is the chairman, the Deputy-vice chancellor, the principals of each constituent college, the deans of the faculties, the chairman of the teaching departments of each constituent college, the librarian, one representative of each of the faculty boards appointed by that board from among its members, the professors of the university, two members elected by the student organization; except that the students' organization shall not be enlisted to attend deliberation of the senate on matters which are considered by the chairman of the senate to be confidential and which relate to the general discipline of students, examination results, the academic performance of students and related matters. Other members may also be included as provided by the university statutes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ku.ac.ke/>. Information about Kenyatta University

### 3 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Governance in its basic theme is relational concept whose meaning depend on the context in which it is applied. There are a variety of definitions found in the literature that making a single unanimously comprehensive definition difficult (Goedegebuure & Hayden, 2007, Kitthanan, 2006, Meek & Davies, 2009, Rhodes, 1996, Stoker, 1998). Though there are different forms of definitions, a common element in conceptualizing it in HE is the notion of multifaceted web of interaction and relationships among bodies operating at different levels depending where, by whom and when the decision is made and on what aspect (Amaral, Jones & Karseth 2002, de Boer & File 2009, Goedegebuure & Hayden 2007, Maassen 2003, Meek 2003). Governance is also viewed as the structure of relationships that authorize policies, plans, and decisions, account for their probity and responsiveness (Gallagher, 2001 in Meek, 2003). On the same note it is described as decision making patterns of authority distribution (de Boer & File (2009, p.10), Marginson & Considine, 2000, p.7, and Meek 2003).

Governance of higher education involves the authority to make decisions about fundamental policies and practices in several critical areas concerning colleges and universities. These areas stretch from their number and location, their mission, their enrolment size, access of students to their instructional programmes and access of the public to other auxiliary services on offer.

Higher education governance can be labeled at two levels-institutional/internal and system coordinated/external governance (de Boer & File, 2009, p.10). External governance encompasses the vast array of macro level structures and relationships through which the regulatory frameworks and policies for tertiary education are developed, how money is allocated to institutions and how they are accountable for the way it is spent, as well as less formal structures and relationships which steer and influence behavior across the system.

Whereas institutional governance refers to the structures and processes within individual institutions that establish responsibilities and authority, determines relationships between positions and thereby define the way through which all parties in a university setting relate to each other ( Maassen 2003, Santiago 2008, de Boer & File, 2009). The relationship between these two levels determines the characteristics of individual HEIs, how they relate to the

whole system, the nature of academic work and more importantly the ways the HEIs are organized and governed. The central focus of this study rests at the institutional level governance. Hence, hereafter the term institutional governance is used to refer to the structures and processes through which communities in universities interact with and influence each other in making decisions.

### **3.1 Olsen's Four Steering Models**

In order to examine how student leaders are involved in the governance of the university it is important to look at the analytical tools to systematically analyze how the core elements underlying institutional governance are related to each other. In other words how the institution exercises authority, how it relates to students, how decisions are made and how far delegation is done for decision making. These issues differ depending on the idea of the university according to individual institution. Olsen has given two views of the university purpose; university as an institution and as an instrument.

As an instrument the university is seen as an organizational tool for achieving the predetermined preferences and interests. It is through being members of the university governing bodies that the students are in a position to present their interests (Olsen, 2007). Whereas as an institution it is seen as a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turn over of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances (Olsen, 2007). There is a way in which the members of the university are expected to behave, student leaders for example; cannot go against the set down rules of the university without breaking links with the university.



### Olsen's Four Models of shared Governance

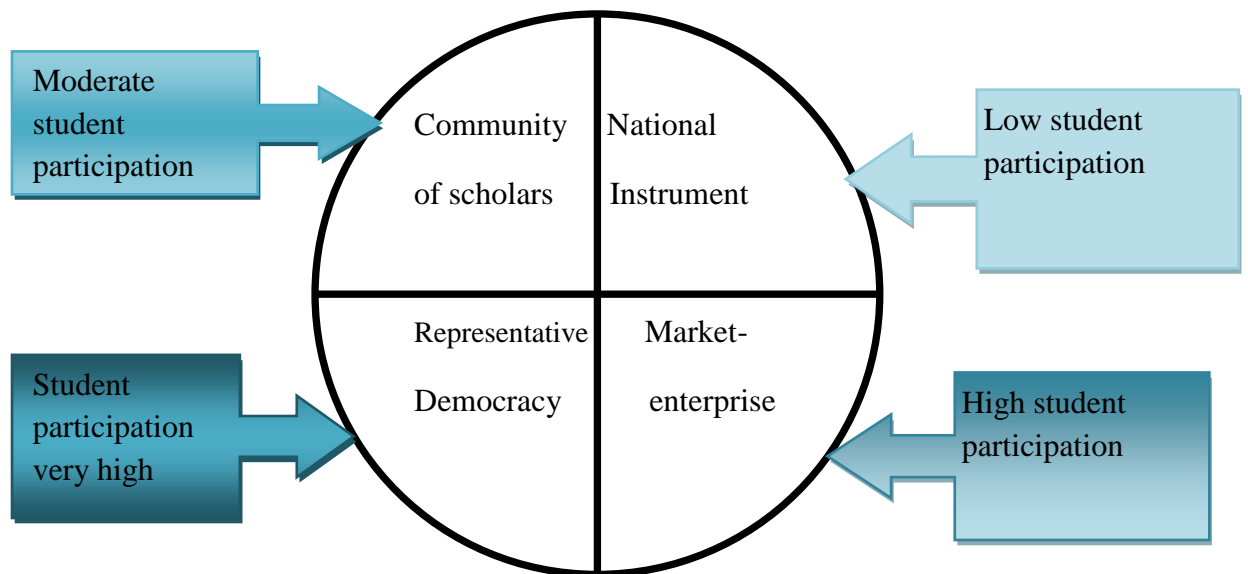


Figure 2. Olsen's University Steering Model

#### 3.1.1 The main ideas of Olsen's Models and relevance to this study

Olsen provided four Steering visions of university governance. He distinguished these four visions of university governance and organization as; “university as a community of scholars, an instrument for national purposes, a representative democracy, and a market enterprise embedded in competitive markets” (Olsen, 2005, p. 7, 8).

These four visions have been formulated primarily with institutional governance in mind, however they include, and may go beyond the best known typology of systematic governance models based on Clark's Triangle of Coordination, which depicts three ideal types: academic oligarchy, state administration and market coordination (Clark, 1983). The visions give an insight into how institutions of higher learning are governed, however a perspective from an individual point of view does not give a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of institutional governance. They are therefore examined in relation to the other.

The institutional autonomy is considered a prerequisite for the existence of the university. The institutions do not want interference from external forces. The aim is to protect their status quo of upholding academic freedom to store and transmit knowledge. In this model the institutions are usually governed by senior academics and institutional leaders who are historically organized in guilds (Clark, 1983). In Clark's idealized typology, this approach to

governance is more or less similar to the classical Humboldtian model. This kind of institutional autonomy is essential for creating a shared vision. It does not however mean every decision is made collectively, but calls for an effective two-way communication. There is transparency and openness (Robson, 2009). However, the institutional administrators would want more control with no interference from external factors.

In the state bureaucracy, the government is in full control of the affairs of the HEi. The main purpose is to carry out and implement government policies. It is the opposite of the community of scholars, higher education as an arm of the state is governed primarily by external actors and factors. University administrators are external appointees rather than being elected by their peers from within the academy (Petr & Minskova, 2010). The state takes care of the funding and regulates the university's operations, which limits the level of institutional autonomy in procedural as well as substantive matters and allows the supervisory authorities, that is the government to steer the universities in a hierarchical way in technical-administrative as well as professional-academic matters (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2007).

This is an indication that this model has similarities with the model of university as a community of scholars in that both the political and academic actors within this model usually share the same values, thus precluding irreconcilable conflicts (Olsen, 2005). The decision is confined to the top that is the top-down approach by the state. At the systematic level it is the political actors of the cabinet and political parties who set the priorities for HEi and not just a small group of public servants (Trow, 1973, 2006). The change in HE institutional governance is through election or changes in political alliances.

The representative democracy model is the opposite of the rule-governed community of scholars. It represents the interests of various stakeholders. This includes groups such as, staff unions, trade unions, industry, student unions and government representatives. The students being stakeholders in the HE have a right to contribute to the running of the university. In this model, state has very reduced control as the emergence of mass public with an interest in HE who increasingly challenge the restriction of decision-making to a few elite actors (Trow, 2006).

This reduces the power and the prominence of senior academics, the position of early career academics is enhanced (Petr & Minskova, 2010). Luescher, (2009) posits that within a politicized university environment where students have strong sense of ownership of the

university and conceive of themselves as a distinct and equal group within the university, student participation may be quite extensive involving conception of students as stakeholders or constituency. Democracy is viewed as an end in itself, so it is important that students are given a say in decisions affecting them. Decision-making is organized around election, bargaining, voting and coalition building among the organized group with the aim of accommodating their interests (Olsens, 2005). By involving student leaders in governance, they act like bridge between the administration and the student body. Through better use of communication modes available within the university, decision-making is enhanced.

In the market enterprise model the power of the state is further diminished and HE is perceived as a one of the commodities available in the competitive market. The universities have turned to be service providers, the students and the staffs are conceived as clients and users' of the university in terms of a consumerist perspective. The universities are governed by the logic of market exchange. Due to the competitive market the institutions require rapid adaptation to changing opportunities and constraints; as such the institutional governance is modeled on corporate governance, with more responsibilities and powers exercised by appointed professional management executives (Petr & Minskova, 2010).

## **3.2 Reflections on Olsen's Steering Models and related literature**

Students are important stakeholders in the university governance. Olsen model on organization and governance of the university has been used to examine the role of student leaders in the governance of the university. The focus was on participation of student leaders, their role in the process of governance and the benefits of involving them in the governance. Student governance is therefore discussed in relevance to these four steering models. A summary of Olsen four steering models of governance is shown in Table 2.

### **3.2.1 Student governance**

It has been noted that from the onset of the universities the students had very limited influence in the governance of the university. Students from the Latin American universities were the only ones who held significant position in the decision-making in the modern university (Altabach, 2006; de Boer & Stensaker, 2007). However this changed with the global wave of

university democratization in the 1960-1970s which swept across the universities across the world. (Luescher-Mamashela, 2010). Schlesinger & Balridge, ( 1982), stated that before these movements, all formal power for decision-making was firmly, formally and legally vested in boards of trustees, and that a departure from that model has been based on boards voluntarily relinquishing control and granting constituencies, such as students, access and opportunities for involvement.

Studies on student governance have indicated that the reasons for these protests emanated from local grievances, general ideological projects and demands for institutional reforms, and some described them as due to “generational conflict” in the industrialized nations ( Feuer, cited in Klineberg, Zavalloni, Louis-Guerin, & BenBrika, 1979; Lipset & Altbach, 1969, cited in Luescher-Mamashela, 2010). As in the case of KU in 2009 a very violent student protest erupted this resulted in the death of some of the students. This was due to disagreement about the registration for courses. Looking from the European perspective, in the Praha conference, it was confirmed that the students should participate in and influence the content of the universities and other higher education institutions (Bergan, 2003). If a university like KU involves student leaders in issues that are pertinent to the student body, conflicts may be very rare.

In this study participation of students, their role and the benefits of involving them in the decision making are some of the factors considered. Each one of them will be discussed in relevance to Olsen’s four models of governance. Even though they do not give a full picture of all these aspects, but they can be applied to Kenyatta University.

### **Participation of students in governance of the university**

In the model of “The community of scholars” the students are viewed as junior members of the academic community. Power rests with the senior academics and the students have very minimal formal participation in decision making, however informal consultation is very common (Luescher-Mamashela, 2010). In any organization such as KU, consultation is very important tool for making good informed decisions. Even though the students are minors the university authority has to get their views on matters that affect them. The student leaders as members of the university community participate in the university boards and committees therefore assist in achieving the university goals. The universities have different levels of administration, through the student government, information is transmitted from both angles;

top-bottom and bottom-up. The notion of students as members of the university community continues to carry weight in the literature on student governance; albeit without further interrogation (see Bergan, 2004, 23-24; Pearson, 2004, p.31; Streeter & Wise 2009, p.3-4).

The student leaders are empowered to take control of matters affecting the students such as in the disciplinary matters. The student voices are easily heard at this level compared to other levels, they can call for an opportunity to contribute towards the academic programs in the university and the restructuring of the administrative system. Student leaders have typically held control over many aspects of student life, such as fee distribution, but have not been granted equal status with their faculty members in decision making in areas such as course scheduling or other curricular matters (Love et al, 2003).

In most cases the students supplement the services that are offered by the university. These include services such as assistance with academic and administrative problems, peer counseling, the provision of financial assistance to needy colleagues, offer study facilities and services, run businesses such as bookstores, internet cafes, tuck shops and restaurants (Luescher, 2005). In this case they have to work together with the senior managers such as the dean of students or the director of student affairs (Luescher, 2005). Student governance is about representing and serving the student body.

In the representative democracy, students as stakeholders have right to participate in the governing of the university. The democratic credentials of governing by stakeholders arise from its origin in a critique of the unilateral 'monolithic mode of governance', where a single group dominates decision making; this dominant group has been the professoriate (Morrow, 1998, 386). The student leaders therefore fight for their space in the running of the university; they create awareness of the desires of the larger student body. University democratization is viewed to involve a transformation of internal governance arrangements in keeping with a vision of university as a "representative democracy" (Olsen, 2007, de Boer & Stensaker, 2007).

University democratization according to Luescher-Mamashela, (2010) is the reconstitution of internal decision-making in universities with reference to democratic principles, inter alia, by making decision-making processes in university more representatives of internal constituencies such as students. Olsen describes the power of students as being related both to significant impact university have on their lives and to the realpolitik, the ability of students to

cause difficulties for the operation of university and society (Olsen, 2007). For the students to participate actively it is important that they elect their representatives who should have substantial powers (de Boer & Stensaker, 2007). In KU the student leaders got their posts through very rigorous elections. It is from these levels that they get opportunity to be members of the administrative committees within the university. The students therefore fight to have equal representation both in legal and budgetary powers (de Boer & Stensaker, 2007).

However this is not the case in most universities world over, a university such as KU, the students participate in decision-making but in matters privy to the university they are just informed of the decision made. de Boer & Stensaker further posits that decision-making powers should not be concentrated but fused or separated among the several; ideally, in a system of horizontal checks and balances the representative council has the upper hand. In KU the student leaders represent the student body in the university governing organ and ensures the voice of the students is heard. From both civic and consumerist arguments, the claim is that, students have rights to representation in decision making as a means of safeguarding their interests (Luescher-Mamashela, 2012).

In the model of university as a national instrument, the students are seen as future elite of the community and are legitimized by the trust enjoyed by the nation. They have to abide by the rule of the nation state in all decision making. Whatever decisions the students make should be for the benefit to the nation. Taylor & Bateson, (2004) posits that universities share a common goal with regard to their students, which is to transmit knowledge and further their interest in academic discipline so as to enable them to enter the social world as qualified individuals and responsible citizens. In this case formal participation of the student leaders is quite limited (Luescher-Mamashela, 2010).

The university being a market-enterprise, the senior managers are the key governors, though their external orientation towards the market in a way makes them less effective in decision-making (Luescher-Mamashela, 2010). The student should have a voice in making decisions on campus since they are affected by them. The participation of the students in governance amounts to little more than a representation of service-user or consumer. As consumers they must establish the quality of the goods that they are provided with at the same time how the money they pay is used. The students therefore participate by safeguarding their interests.

### **3.2.2 Roles of student leaders in the governance university**

Leadership is a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of the other in the accomplishment of a common task (Keith, 2010). To manage people the aspect of leadership has to be considered, there are therefore various factors which have to be taken into consideration. Actions taken by the leaders and those involved are from what theories, principles and schools of thought which in their estimation have influenced and taught them most (Heil, Bennis, & Stephens, 2000). It is therefore logical to state that the behavior of leaders is based on theories, hypotheses or some kind generalizations. This section will explore roles the student leaders play in the university

Leadership whether shared or individual, plays an important role in the university's effectiveness and satisfaction of its members. Universities are organizations populated by humans and their role especially those in leading positions such as students, is of crucial importance for the institution wellbeing. Bolmans & Deal, (1997), has emphasized that organizations exist to serve human needs. As governance structures in HE is changing, the role of student leaders need to be taken into consideration in order to serve others. As representatives they should explicitly be seen to playing their roles. The students' representation in university governance of late has been considered in reference to the role of students as novice scholars, clients, citizen and consumers of higher education.

As community of scholars, students in many countries have exemplified their sense of responsibility in their institution and have acquired respected place in the HE governance structures in the process of internal and external assessment process. (Tella, 2008). Sharrock, (2000), noted that students do not consume education in the same way as a customer consumes food at Macdonald's, instead students at university actively engage with ideas that are presented by their lecturers, the students evaluate the curriculum presented to them.

The students and the university need each other; the universities need ideas, energy and talent, while the students need careers, opportunities. It is through shared involvement at every level of the university structure that students may succeed in identifying themselves with the institution and in attaining their highest level of academic and personal development.

One of the main functions of the university is to transmit knowledge to the students, for without the students there would be no university. Due to this the students are increasingly being seen as the "major stakeholder" in higher education and in the rhetoric of higher

education policy, they are the main focus, but this has not been reflected in what their roles are supposed to be (Petr & Minksova , 2010).

Whatever role the student leaders take, is a representation of the needs of the student body. In this model student leader as legitimate stakeholders represents the rest of the students in the committees where they are able to air the views of the students to the authorities. The students are members of the university community and so they have a right to equal representation in matters affecting the students directly.

In the state bureaucracy the students have minimal influence when it comes to effecting national policies; the students are seen as the future elite (citizens) of the society. Decision-making are top-down approach from the government; it is usually done in institutions such as the parliament, but from a consumerist perspective they deserve a voice to know how the fee they pay is used since this belongs to them. However the student leaders can be seen as being socialized for what they will be involved in the future.

In the market enterprise model, the role of student leaders is that of a customer demanding for quality goods provided by the university.

### **3.2.3 Merits and demerits of sharing governance with students**

Student leaders in wider political activities and in university governance structures are an important aspect of institutional life. They are involved in institutional governance for different reasons, ranging from career and academic aspirations to highly personal reasons to get access to the job market. By giving the students the necessary skills on democracy, it is both beneficial to the student and to the society thus resulting in high level of value for institutions as educational experience providers. Therefore as members of the community the student leaders engage in activities that may bring change in the institution since the major aim of the university is to transmit knowledge. As the student involve in decision making at this level, they are introduced to the academic life and research which are core components of the HEi.

In KU the president and the secretary- general attend the senate meetings where they contribute in the decisions made about the students and the university. By being members of the senate the student leaders gain more knowledge about decision making and the board



members get an opportunity to see the impact of student involvement in the decisions made. Student participation can also have an influence on the quality of educational end product of the university. By participating in the committees the student leaders can facilitate the evaluation of the curricula and the teaching practices through the identification of the shortfalls in the HE programs and instruction (Lee, 1987 cited in Menon, 2005). It also argued that by closely involving students in quality control means obtaining direct feedback from the consumers of education. They have a complete overview of the complete curriculum (Visser et al, 1998; Echina, 1980, Huppertz, 1996). The student leaders are best placed to give important feed back in several aspects of the curriculum. Student leaders have many ideas and suggestions and the university has a duty to find out or listen to their experience.

In the representative model, the students gain by participating in student governance in that they have improved self- discipline, increased development of multicultural view, a better acceptance of diversity and divergent thinking, a better understanding of complex organizations and democratic ideals, and a good avenue for the students to realize a democratic process (May, 2009, Pascarelli & Terenzini, 2005, Logue et al, 2005, Boland, 2005).

Students who are in leadership positions gain a lot of knowledge about structure and politics of a large non-profit organization such as a university. Through their participation in the committees, they learn how to express and defend well-founded opinions in meetings. The student leaders given opportunity experience a certain level of control over their own decisions. They are empowered by this and can confidently be actively involved in discovering other areas of improvement (Visser et al, 1998). This involvement also improves the relationship between the students and the administrators.

The university as a national instrument; the students are introduced to democratic ideals and practices (Lee, 1987). McGrath, 1970 also proposes that, students being consumers of education, they are entitled to participatory rights in managerial processes and practices at their institutions. This view corresponds to the current trends in HE, associated with the adoption of a marketing orientation by tertiary institutions. The view draws attention to the importance of meeting the consumer needs if the university is to survive and compete in the market (Menon, 2005).

Lizzio & Wilson, (2009) in their study, posits that the merits of involving students in the running of the affairs of institutions are generally described from one of the three perspectives namely: functional, developmental and social. Whatever the students involve in should be beneficial to the university, to the student and also to the society. As noted in ( Sabin and Daniels, 2001 in Lizzio & Wilson, 2009), the merits of sharing governance from the functional perspective brings about enhanced accountability in terms of transparency of policy and decisions, evident deliberation in relation to consideration of the stakeholder views and learning from experience. By involving students in quality control means obtaining direct feedback from the consumers of the education. (Visser,.....Astin, 1993, Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The students are more concerned about what they will get in return in an environment of competitive market. As the university is more market oriented, the students have the right to question how the money they pay is used within the university. The university therefore gets direct feedback from the consumers of the products. Due to the competitive market the students have the freedom to choose the best provider. The university is therefore forced to come up with new innovations in the kind of programs they have to offer. The students have an opportunity to choose from a variety of courses and schools.

However there are also negative feelings about involving students in the governance of the university. McGrath, (1970) cited in Sanseviro (,2006), identified five objections to student participation; dominance of the academic society by the students, student maturity, student attrition/brief involvement, ignorance of professional values, interference with student academic and employment pursuits. In most cases the meetings are called when the students are in the class and so have to either miss the lectures or the meeting.

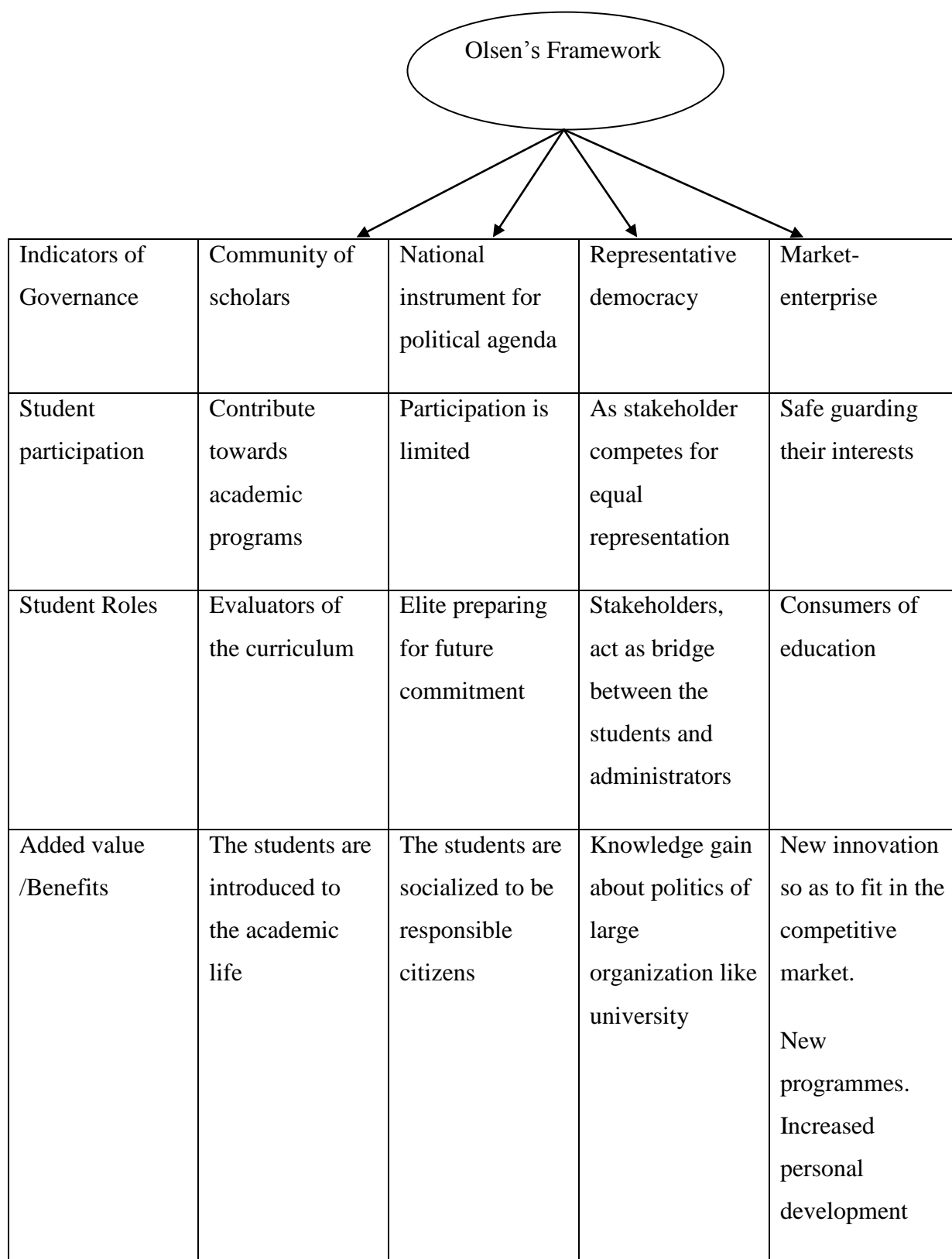


Table 2. Summary of Olsen Framework

## 4 METHODOLOGY

The research focused on the involvement and the role student leaders play in the decision-making within the university administration and the value of being part of the system. It employed a qualitative research strategy. This chapter presents and discusses the overall methodological framework employed in the thesis. Also, it presents information about the research design, description of the target population and sampling, data collection methods and instruments used. In addition, the main study and the general data organization is discussed.

### 4.1 Research approach and design

The aim of the study was to find out the ways in which students are involved in the governance of Kenyatta University. The study adapted qualitative and interpretive approach. According to Robson, (2002) qualitative research focuses on in-depth study and on relatively small samples, selected purposefully. Qualitative approach is more concerned with the understanding of individuals' perception of certain phenomena such as the involvement of student leaders in the governance. It "usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection of data" (Byrman, 2008, p.22). Qualitative approach also involves interpretivist commitment that 'requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social actions' (Bryman, 2008, p.10).

The study applies qualitative approach which made it possible to investigate how student leaders are involved in the governance of KU and the roles they played in the process. The student leaders' involvement in governance could best be expressed in words rather than through any form of quantification. Through the interviews the student leaders were able to express verbally how they participate in decision-making in KU, qualitative approach was therefore more applicable.

The issue of governance varies widely not only among countries but also among institution of the same country, this study focused on how students were involved in governance of Kenyatta University. KU being an individual institution of HE qualitative approach assisted in exploring the ways in which students were involved in the governance of the university from the perspective and interpretation of the student leaders. Qualitative approach also allows

student voices to be heard and focus on their experiences (Bryman, 2008, p.396). And this is one of the benefits of qualitative approach as the participants give their own perspectives. Bryman, 2008 also states that in qualitative research students are not treated as objects to be controlled by technical procedures, but as active participants who can interact with the researcher (p. 396).

#### **4.1.1 Case study**

The research involves the interpretation of meaning in social contexts that had not been manipulated, and the strategy for investigation chosen was case study. Gall, Gall, & Borg, (2007), defines case study as "...the in-depth study of phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon." The case study was therefore ideal for investigating how student leaders are involved in the governance of KU and what their roles are. The case study being an empirical investigation, the main issues about the phenomenon can be explained through investigations. Case study is appropriate for studies which ask what, why and how questions (Yin, 2003); it helps bring out participants point of view on the phenomena and therefore a deeper understanding of the phenomena leading may be to better practice. Therefore the questions in this research study are posed as 'how and what'.

Student governance is a major phenomenon in HEi, given that Kenya has a number of public and private universities. It was impractical to involve all universities in the study given the limited time for data collection and the cost involved. KU also being an institution which has had frequent confrontation between the students and the university authorities it was of interest to find out how the two parties interact, so case study was preferable.

#### **4.1.2 Sampling**

This is a process of selecting a small group of cases from out of a large group ( William, 2011, p.93). The informants were purposefully sampled based on the assumption that the investigator wanted to establish a good correspondence between the research questions and the sampling (Bryman, 2008, p.415). This technique was mainly used because qualitative inquiry typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples, and that studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002:230, Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The aim of the study is not to generalize the

findings, but other institutions could analyze for themselves what is practical to their cases in terms of student governance. In addition, to ascertain the effect of involving student in the governance of the university, only student leaders of Kenyatta University were chosen. The study involved six students, four males and two females (they were only two in the executive). This was done to be able to collect their views on the extent of their involvement. I was able to get access to the students through the dean of students after which I arranged with individual student leader on the time and day to carry out the interview. However this took a bit of time as the research authorization letter from the Deputy vice-chancellor academic had not been received in the office of the dean of students by then. The dean of students sorted this out and gave me the contacts of all the student leaders.

There was an interest to get the views from the general student body but this was not possible because it was the beginning of the semester and the students were moving up and down finalizing with their course registrations. So to settle down for an interview proved difficult and time was running out. At the same time the student leaders were better placed to give the information the investigator was interested in since they were in a more direct contact with the university administrators.

## **4.2 Data collection**

The study adapted a multiple- case approach of data collection which is also known as triangulation of data sources. Triangulation can include different methods of data collection such as interviews, field notes and document analysis. Robson (2002) and Gall et. al. (2007) pointed out that the products of triangulation are useful as its primary purpose of validating information. Using different methods of gathering data may increase the confidence in its validity and can also improve the quality of the data. In consequence the accuracy of the findings is also improved. This study uses semi-structured interviews, document analysis and field notes. Interviews were the main method used for gathering data mainly from their natural contexts. In this case field notes and document analysis were used to get information which was not presented during the interview.

### 4.2.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interview was used to collect information from the student leaders on how they are involved in university governance, their role and the value of their involvement. ( see Appendix: 3 ). Robson, (2002: 270) defines semi-structured interview as where the interviewer has prepared a set of questions in advance, but is free to modify their order depending upon the interviewer's perception of what seems appropriate in the context of the conversation. By using the semi-structured interviews, the investigator was able to dig deep by reframing interview questions in different ways to find out the possible existence of this phenomenon and how this may affect the aspect of student leaders' involvement in governance. Through this method the student leaders were able to discuss how they interact with administrators, the role they played in governing process and the benefits of the involvement in KU.

The interviews were conducted a one to one basis and the questions were open-ended. The semi-structured format was thought to be the most appropriate method, this was to ensure that significant questions posed by the study are addressed, while allowing for the participants views and perspectives to be revealed through an open-ended facilitation of discussion. The student leaders through the discussions freely aired their perceptions of how they were involved and the roles they played. The interviews were conducted in the student association offices. This was to allow the students to attend their classes.

It is important to use places the informants feel comfortable to talk freely and expose their experiences to the investigator (Kvale. S & Brinkmann S. 2009, Bryman, 2008). However it was not possible to get the students in the course of the day so the interviews were done in the evenings. This allowed the students to attend their classes and have them when they were not under pressure. The interviews were conducted in English. The interview sessions were audio recorded with the permission of the informants, recording allows for a follow-up during the transcription process (Bryman, 2008, p. 451).

A semi-structured interview is advantageous in that it is adaptable. This assists in following up ideas, probe responses to obtain more specific information than the interviewee is providing. Through interview it is possible also to investigate motives, feelings and opinions. In addition the use of interviews enables the investigator to have an opportunity to see

responses in form of expressions made by the interviewee like the tone of the voice, facial expression, language, hesitations.

### **Sources of data**

Method	Data source	Purpose
Interview	Semi-structured interviews with the student leaders	To obtain the relevant information on the topic from people involved in the governance of the university
Document analysis	KUSA constitution, official web site of Kenyatta university	To obtain information about KUSA organization and information about KU
Field notes	Observation and informal talk	Information not covered by the interviews or documents

Table 3. Sources of data

### **4.2.2 Document Analysis**

Document such as the institutional documents, student association constitution were consulted so as to get an overview of the informants' involvement. Previous reports on students' activities in the university were also used as part of document analysis.

### **4.2.3 Field notes**

This are notes to be taken in the field. They include what the investigator saw here or experience. This would be a source of further investigation during the interviews.



## 4.3 Validity and Reliability

Kvale (1998) defined validity as referring to the ability to produce true knowledge through the application of methodologically controlled investigation.

Reliability is the extent to which other researchers would arrive at similar results if they studied the same case using exactly the same procedures as the first researcher. Validity and reliability are the two important indicators of the quality of the research. Yin, (2003), has judged the quality of a case study design by three types of validity, namely;

- Construct validity
- Internal validity
- External validity
- Reliability

Construct validity is the extent to which a measure in a case study correctly operationalizes the concepts being studied. This form of measure is very challenging in the case study research. This study is a case study and more descriptive, and according to Gall, Gall and Borg, (2008). The criterion on internal validity is not applicable to descriptive case study research; given the present study is not experimental design by its approach. There is no full confidence whether all relevant explanation for the observed results are made.

Reliability is to ensure the internal reliability steps undertaken to complete the research are operationalized and consistently defined.

### 4.3.1. Threats to validity and reliability

In this study there were some difficulties that I encountered in the process of data collection and analysis. There were threats to validity, the sample included only the student leaders, and it would have been possible to include the other students who were not leaders. The interview guide had open-ended questions and this could lead to the participant giving irrelevant answers therefore wasting a bit of time. The interviews did not start immediately for on arrival at the site I was informed I had to make a formal application to the vice-chancellor to be granted permission to carry out the study within the university. I did this and had to wait

for two weeks before I could embark on study, I had only one month to collect data, two weeks were lost as I waited for the response.

Though we had agreed on the day and time two student leaders did not turn up at the agreed time. I had to make new appointments and time was running out this led to a bit of rush so as to get all the needed information. This could make the students not to give detailed information. In the process of the interview, some of the student leaders could not mention anything negative about the administration and were very much on the positive side. This perhaps could be due to the fact that they had just come to office after KU had had a very serious revolt against the university.

Data analysis should take place in the process of the data collection. This was not possible given the limited time I had to meet the respondents. I could not transcribe and get back to the students for further clarification.

#### **4.3.2. Steps to strengthen validity and reliability**

The main purpose of the rules applied in the collection of data is to ensure that the research is as correct, accurate and precise as possible. Different methods and procedure were used to enhance the validity and reliability of the instruments through the research design.

Another way was by preparing and using suitable instruments, visit the university in advance, the study was going to be done in the natural setting. The students were assured of the confidentiality of their personality and that the information given was to be used only for the study. I also reframed some of the questions to be able to get the desired responses.

### **4.4 Ethical Consideration**

In qualitative research, a research where human subjects are involved has possibility for ethical issues arise (Creswell, 2007). Befring (2004), in reference to the Norway Personal Registry Act (1978), on the norms and regulation for safeguarding the personal integrity of researchers and research volunteers requires informed consent of the participant, the participants right to inspection and oath of confidentiality. In this study, I sought informed

consent from the participants. Informed consent refers to the information given to the presumed participants of a given study (Bryman, 2008).

It usually illustrates the purpose of the study, its expected outcomes and expectations from the participants. In this context, the University of Oslo gave me an introduction letter which indicated I was a student on field study for educational purposes. KU requires that anybody intending to carry out research in the institution must seek permission from the university authorities. I made an application to the university and research authority was given promptly and I delivered them to the relevant departments in the university. To access the student leaders, the dean of students availed their phone numbers and was able to contact them and got their consent to participate in the study.

However, I was able to meet them physically and explain further. To clear any misconceptions about the intentions of the study, an explicit overview of what the research entailed and how the results will be utilized, was given to the participants. Since the study dealt with very thorny issue of how universities allow student participation in administration, I assured to them about their confidentiality in terms of the informants they would give. This was to gain confidence from them. At the same time pseudonyms were used to represent their real names during the transcription and in the data presentation.

During the interview process, I sought further consent from the interviewee to be interviewed and be taped. The literature review also acknowledges all the sources of information.

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## 5 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Introduction

The aim was to find how student are involved in the governance of the university. The cases were student leaders, six students were interviewed and they were the executive members of the student organization. Data was collected using interview method and document analysis. Pseudo names were used to keep the confidentiality of the respondents. The presentation first looks at the responses interviewees gave to the items of the interview guide and the leadership issues related to the student leaders. The analysis was based on the research questions.

### 5.2 How do student leaders participate in decision making in the university?

It was of interest to find out how the students got to the positions they held in Kenyatta University Student Association (KUSA), and why they chose to be leaders. In some institutions student leaders have been appointed by the high authority with or without first consulting them. The students explained that leadership is like a calling, driven by self motivation or passion. They clarified nobody is forced to vie for any seat in the association. And for one to get these posts you had to be elected by the student body after holding a very rigorous campaign which in most cases is comparable to the country's political parties. The candidates have to appeal to the electorate and assure them to be their representatives in the governance of the university. One student leader had this to say:

*“my position is passion driven as a service to students in relation to them and myself.. I was democratically elected by the majority in all the participating campuses. For one to be in the executive committee you have to be elected by all the campuses, so I had to look for votes in all the three main Campuses. Kenyatta University has seven campuses.”*(Interview, student leader, January 2011).

Be a student and a leader can be challenging especially in a large institution such as a university like KU if one lacks the necessary skills. For KU to fulfill its vision and mission, it would want its new members in the decision making organs to understand its operation. The student leaders were therefore asked what preparation they had in readiness to undertake the

new offices and to play their roles effectively. Most of the students indicated they had had prior responsibilities during their high school period, which actually gave them an insight to what leadership is. Responsibility at an early stage gives an insight into the expectation in the new positions. However they also indicated that upon their election into the student organization leadership, the university organized further training on what their new roles entailed. One of them had this comment:

*“the university organized and gave us a very intensive one week leadership training workshop which was quite worthwhile though it was pro- administration, but it helped us a lot because during that process we had an opportunity to meet in a free atmosphere with all the university administrators from the Vice Chancellor to the Deans and be able to ask questions on matters that were not clear to us. It was a nice way of setting the pace as we were coming to a new world”* (Interview, student leader, January 2011)

Though this was group training for the student leaders, others were also given training on individual capacity. The leader of the student association should be seen to have more authority in the process of attending to student issues. For this reason the president and the vice-president had an opportunity to gain more skills. This was reported by one of the student leaders;

*“the president and the vice-president were taken for a three week training on conflict resolution in the United States of America (US).....this was an eye opener in ways in which to identify possibilities of conflicts and how to solve them. This has assisted me in my tenure to see there is stability. At the same time the secretary-general and I have had opportunity to attend seminars for parastatal heads in Kenya so we end up learning from people with vast experience in leadership”* (interview, student leader, January 2011).

Leadership motivates most students, but it is important that they understand the quality of a good leader in an institution like KU. The student leaders concurred in their statements that a leader should be one who is principled, firm and self motivated. One of them had this to say:

*“Leadership at times may require you to bite the bullet for or against the people, you know sometimes they may send you to say something but you know that by principle it*

*is not right as per the university policy. So you have to stand by this not because they sent you but because it is right.....* (Interview, student leader, January 2011).

Another student leader had this to add..

*“a leader ensure there is stability in the organization, when there is stability in the university the students are able to study without interruptions since academics is the core activity of the university.”*(Interview, student leader, January 2011).

The students were asked the extent to which the university administration involved them where decisions on matters of the university were made; the response was that they were members of different boards and committees where they participated in the deliberations. One had this to say:

*“ I am a member of the governing council which is the highest body in the university, it is comprised of very many people in high position in this country, we get a lot of experience by listening to how deliberations are made and I also give my contribution. In the senate there are many committees to handle different issues so I participate in them. For example the committee that dealt with the introduction of the shuttle buses I was a member. I am also a member of the KUSA Assessment Management, where we assess the university administration management”* (Interview, student leader, January 2011)

Even though the students indicated that they were involved in the decision making process, there were times that they felt they were ignored; their response on this issue was; *“in very sensitive issues, decisions are made without consulting us”* they gave the example of students who had been found with exam irregularities, decisions made were entirely confidential. Such issues touch on the integrity of the institution the authority feels their say is final without contribution from the student leaders. Others also depended on the magnitude of the matter. One had this to say;

*“there was the local committee organizing for the East African University Games where our in put was very little, may be due to the scope of the event that carted for the whole East Africa Region. It also depended on the level of access to information and resources. The level in the chain of administration also restricts you from a lot of things”* (Interview, student leader, January 2011)

Transmission of knowledge is an important function of the university, the students are the recipients their input should also be given consideration. The student leaders were also asked their involvement on making decisions about academic issues since this one of the main goals of being in the university. From their experience, they stated that at the beginning of the semester there tended to be a problem of some lecturers not taking up their classes, one respondent had this to say:

*“There times especially at the beginning of the semester some lectures may take up to three weeks before they appear in class, it my responsibility as the academic secretary to ensure students are taught, so when issues of such magnitude arise students report to me then I forward the matter to the academic registrar or the deputy vice-chancellor academic. They would take up the issue with the concerned lecturer. So there is a lot of work that normally goes on.”*(Interview, student leader, January 2011).

In KU it is also upon the academic secretary to ensure that the students do not miss their classes due to lack of lecture halls or collision on the timetable. All these in KU are channeled through the academic secretary then to the various departments, schools and the management. The students were also asked how the students had a say in the courses they were studying since some are geared towards specific careers. They reported that this is one of the areas that the student association has played a major role in supporting the university;

*“the students are admitted through the Joint Admissions Board (JAB) to study the different courses depending on the cut-off points in their Form four exams. But before that the student leaders usually visit various high schools in the country through an outreach programme in KU known as Centre for Career Development and Placement (CCDP) to talk to the students about the courses offered in KU. And when they are admitted and report, we organize a meeting with relevant officers in the university and talk to them about the courses they have chosen. Basically the courses are university programmes so the students make their own choices as per their qualifications”*  
(Interview, student leader January 2011)

Majority of institutions of higher learning always experience collisions between the students and the administrators, especially when the desires of the students are not met and also among themselves. This in most cases results in scenario which may not acceptable to an institution like KU. The investigator sought to know how the student leaders were involved on handling

of discipline matters. One of the respondents stated that by virtue of his position in the student council he was a member of the committee, he had this to say;

*“In the disciplinary committee of the senate I represent them when they are caught on the wrong side of the university laws. I sit in three boards; student welfare in the sub-committee of the senate where I represent the students. I sit with the President and the Vice- President. I am also a member of university council where I represent the students in the council. I also participate in the other committees appointed in the senate dealing with different issues. We are fully involved but in the very sensitive issues decisions are made without consultation”* (Interview, student leader, January 2011).

All organizations have chains of command at different levels and for smooth running of the institution. KU being a university with various campuses a proper means of communication was essential. It is through proper communication within an institution that members at every level can contribute to the achievement of the institutional goals. When student leaders are listened to and their proposals considered a lot of confrontation is minimized. The investigator asked the students how information to and from the administrators reach them. The response from one of them concurs with the feeling of all the rest:

*“.. they consult on any issue touching on the students, that’s the biggest achievement we have made. We the student leaders are informed first, and then we inform the student body. And in the same way we forward issues from the student body to the administration. This can be done through other forms of communication such as word of mouth, the circulars and of more recent the Kenyatta University (KU) Radio. But you have to understand we are a big community so there is certain drag and delay in between and we can miss some information”*(Interview, student leader, January 2011)



### 5.3 What is the role of student leaders in decision making?

The student leaders were asked what they felt was their role in the governance of the university. All the student leaders concurred that their major role was being a representative, a person who would talk to the administration on behalf of the other students. Their comment was;

*“I sit in the senate committee and my role is to represent the student views in the university senate, so all matters of students ranging from the number of units they are supposed to take, any issues with the lecturers, lecture halls, the library, examination or internet I attend to them”*(Interview, student leader January 2011)

The university being a big organization it is not possible for the administrators to get to know what is going on within the student body so the student leaders are a link, they are like supervisors or overseers for the university administration. They had this to say;

*“in the executive each one of us has a section to be responsible for such as gender, academics, security and accommodation, sports and entertainment, issues of health and environment, finance of the student council. We have also other student leaders known as the congress; they represent smaller units such as the halls of residence. All of them give reports to the university administration through the student affairs office”* (Interview, student leader, January 2011)

The student leaders also added that even though they represent the interests of the students it was important to make the student body understand what the view of the administrators are and at the same time make the administrators to know what the students want. Through such a process decisions are made with the student in put. Their comment was;

*“you know sometimes the students may send you to say something but you know that by principle it is not right as per the university policy. So you have to stand by this not because they sent you but because it is right”* (Interview, student leader, January 2011)

One of the student leaders stated that their role was to represent students in the disciplinary committee where they played the role of the advocate. The student leader indicated that this was one of the driving forces that made him to vie for position in the student leadership. The knowledge I get in these deliberations would also be of advantage even after I leave the university. One student leader had this comments;

*“ I am like an advocate for the students when they have been found to have gone against the laws of the university. It was one of my desires to get a post in the student government so as to speak for students where they do not have an opportunity”*  
(Interview, student leader, January 2011)

As student leaders they reported that they worked well as collaborators within the student association and also with the university administrators;

*“the student leaders must learn to work with the management, this does not mean saying yes to all their proposals, but you develop a good working relationship. During our tenure we have been very cooperative and have not encountered much problem because when there is an issue we sit down and analyze it, they get our perspective as students and we get theirs as management. In the student council we deal with issues as a combined team, any matter brought to the office in the absence of the one responsible will be handled by the student leader present and an understanding is reached”*(Interview, student leader, January 2011)

To focus on the main aim of the study I posed the question of what they had learnt being members of these committees. They confirmed that the experience has been quiet beneficial to the way they present and handle issues affecting the students. Their view was as follows;

*“Previously student leaders could not oppose the decisions made by their seniors, but now I can stand up and air my views on how things should go. I can also have an impact. For example, currently in the Disciplinary committee, I have made an impact and this should go down in history, not all disciplinary cases are brought to the committee. Earlier on there was no classification between a major or a minor case, all were brought before the committee”* (Interview, student leader, January 2011)

The student leaders also acknowledged that their views were taken into consideration and implemented:

*“For example the issue of registration for courses, the university has been so lenient to the students. The students asked for an extension of the deadline and as leaders we presented this and they listened to us because it came in the middle of the month and by this time majority of parents have not gotten their salaries. The deadline was extended up to the end of the month when the parents would have been paid salaries.”*(Interview, student leader, January 2011)

One of the student leaders also indicated that he was happy that out of 9 proposals he had forwarded, 8 had been implemented:

*I made recommendations of how the university could make internet accessible to the students, so I wrote to the VC detailing how this could be done, she was impressed and forwarded it to the board for discussion and approval. So the views of the students were taken in, you see sometimes when students views are not considered the result would be disruptions in the university. The student leaders were the key players here.”*(Interview, student leader, January 2011)

Leader feel fulfilled when their ideas are respected and taken in. Student leaders represent the interest of the student body on further probing one of them had this to say:

*“..they are implemented at times, but you know the university has its own policies, you may make decisions as a student leader but you must consult a lot, or else it takes time before its implemented”.*(Interview, student leader, January 2011)

## **5.4 Benefits of involving students leaders in the governance of the university**

The student leaders were also asked what they felt was the value of their involvement in the governance. One had this to say;

*“the views of the students will be heavily represented in the university, the students are the university, without students you cannot have a university. And the student leaders are the link between the administration and the student body. They will only*

*get to know what the students are doing if they involve the student leaders. The management is also able to run the university in a more relaxed way. The conflicts between the students and the administration are reduced. If there is peace and good working relationship with the students the students will sell the university to the outside world” (Interview, student leader, January 20011)*

In addition, they said that by being members of the committees, they had gained confidence and become quiet responsible. Through leadership they have been able to network with many friends and organizations.

I went further to probe the student leaders about their views on how best they could participate in decision making in the university. They had this to say;

*It is through election of student leaders. This is a community of intellectuals so you should not elect somebody due to the political standing in the country. We should elect somebody based on KU system, whose manifesto is principled or his history is worth being a leader. Once you elect a good leader the rest will just follow” (Interview, student leader, January 2011)*

#### **5.4.1 Positive changes in the student leadership**

New innovations come about due to previous history; student participation in university governance at times has brought about serious confrontations with the university administrators. The students were asked about the changes that have occurred in Kenyatta University that have resulted in reduced student uprisings. The students indicated a lot of change has occurred due to the administrators opening up to the students and working together. One student leader reported the following;

*“I can say there was a gap between the student union (KUSA) and the administrators but it is now narrowing, in the 90s I can say the students were very violent and in most cases the student leaders were the inciters. This has now gone down as the administrators have tried to neutralize this by bringing the students on board. I can call any of the administrators on their mobile phones and tell them what’s going on. Now we are like equal partners when they say something which is not as we feel we say no and we have to negotiate. The university administrators in some cases will say*

*we go your way though it is not as per the university policy. In Kenyatta University the VC addresses the students quite frequently, listens and answers them directly. The university is now opening up, there is a little democracy. Previously the university handled issues unilaterally without involving the students”* (Interview, student leader, January 2011)

## 6 DISCUSSIONS

### 6.1 Introduction

The study focused on how student leaders are involved in the governance of the university. In this section the results are discussed with reference to analytical framework that incorporates Olsens' Four Steering Models of university governance, and related literature to answer the research question. The main research question being;

*How are student leaders involved in the governance of Kenyatta University?*

<b>Indicators of Governance</b>	<b>Community of scholars</b>	<b>National instrument for political agenda</b>	<b>Representative democracy</b>	<b>Market-enterprise</b>
Student participation	Decision by seniors  Monitoring of lectures	Skill acquisition	Consultation  Linkage between students and administrators	Assessed disbursement of funds  Advertise courses
Student Roles	In put in the development of programs	Future elite	Inculcate democratic values  The voice of the student body	Overseers of management and products
Added value /Benefits	Monitoring of the lectures	Skill acquisition for future use	Student demands are met  Learn to have divergent reasoning	New innovation so as to fit in the competitive market.  New programs. Increased personal development

Table 4. Summary of findings on student governance

## **6.2 Student leaders' participation in decision making**

From the data it was evident that all the student leaders had self motivation to take up leadership in the student association in order to share in the university leadership. Motivation is having self drive to involve in an activity. From the students responses they indicated it was their own choice to be leaders. However some student leaders had had an opportunity to be leaders previously in their line of education.

In Olsen Steering Model, institutional autonomy is considered a prerequisite for the existence of the university. The decisions are made without the interference of the external forces, students as part of the community could have a say in the governance of the university. The findings revealed in KU, the regulation governing it allowed for the student leaders to be represented in the governance of the university by being members of different boards and committees, from the senate to the departmental level.

The committees such as, academic committee, sports and entertainment committee, disciplinary were those that dealt with issues affecting the students directly. For example, as members of the disciplinary committee they represent students who have broken the university laws, they take part in the decision made for or against the student depending on the case, and this is one of the areas where the impact of the student leaders has been felt. They were able to convince the governing council to categorize the cases against the students. It was through the shared deliberation that this was done.

One of the main functions of the university is transmission of knowledge, as such students were found to be members of the academic committee. Institutional autonomy focuses on the development of the teaching and learning in the university. By involving the student leaders they acquire skills in relation to academic processes. For any organization to function successfully it has to have well trained and competent staff, and the university is no exception. To have students as part of the decision making team, the university ensured that they are well trained in the roles that they will have to play.

The data shows as members of the university community the student leaders were taken for an intensive leadership training which was organized by the university. They acknowledged the importance of this training as it gave them an insight on what to expect in the governing of the

KU. In most universities, the development of student leadership is not part of the academic curriculum but it is regarded as part of students' non-academic activities in clubs and organizations. The findings further indicate that the student leaders' impact was mainly in matters on class attendance by the lecturers, lecture halls, timetabling, number of units they are supposed to take, examination, internet connection and the use of library. It was also revealed the students monitored the lecturers in their commitments to work. This can be compared to the Humboldtian Model in which the students had overall control of their lecturers.

By being members of these committees the student leaders and the student body felt they were part and parcel of the university community in decision making process (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011). Committees in the management of higher institutions play a very important role in decision making process. The findings show the students were satisfied with their participation in decision-making, matters concerning the students were decided on with mutual consultation between them and the university authorities.

However others that were entirely confidential to the university were made without their involvement. The student leaders gave the example of matters dealing with exam irregularities were handled without involving them. In KU the chain of command also restricts the student leaders from getting access to all the information and the magnitude of the population the students stated there is a tendency of dragging in the process.

Even though the top administrators would want to be the final say in most of their deliberation, there are areas that the student leaders must be involved as the administrators can not get to the student body for information they may need without going through the student leaders. Within KUSA the executives were also charged with responsibilities falling in their portfolio such as being in charge of security and accommodation, gender, sports and entertainment, issues of health and environment, and finance of the student council. It was therefore revealed that in KU the student leaders have had an opportunity to contribute to matters affecting the life of students but have not had an equal status with the faculty members when it comes to curricular matters. When student leaders are effective in influencing policy decisions it motivates the other students' current and future interests more clearly.



In Olsen's model the students are viewed as stakeholders in the university, and as such have a right to contribute to the running of the university, having been duly elected to these positions. Olsen, (2005) state that decisions are organized around elections, bargaining, voting and coalition among members in order to accommodate the interest of everyone. As such universities being democratic establishment, decisions made must reflect the opinion of a cross section of the staff and the students, if such decisions are to be accepted ( Longing, 2002; Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011). In KU student leaders' representation in the committees is in the ratio of 1:10, the students have therefore to fight hard and lobby for their opinions to be accepted.

The findings revealed the student leaders were consulted in most of the issues affecting on the lives of the students within the university. It is through constant consultation that conflicts between the students and the university administrators are reduced. This one of the areas that the student leaders pointed out they had made a big achievement. The Vice-Chancellor has also come up with a routine to address the student body once in a while. In this forum the students are informed of the new developments in the university, and they also get opportunity to pose questions directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

For an organization to run successfully there is need for consultation among all parties concerned and KU is no exception. It is therefore important that the authorities listen to student demands, the student leaders revealed that they managed to contain tension which was building up due to the deadline for course registration. Through their intervention the deadline was extended by another three weeks which was acceptable to the student body. It is through shared responsibility that problems can be sorted out amicably. The student leaders are the link between the administration and the student body.

Olsen model, in the university as an instrument for pushing national policies the students are seen as future elite of the community. But the purpose of public higher education in democratic societies is not limited to preparing students for specific roles in the labour market, but is also meant to provide students with generic skills, opportunities for personal growth and development, and capacity for critical thinking and deliberating skills in preparation for democratic citizenship (Bergan, 2004, p.14-16 and 24 in Luescher-Mamashela, 2012).

The findings revealed that by involving the student leaders in the various committees which were composed of individuals from out of the university the students had an opportunity to learn some aspects of leadership/governance which they could apply later in the society. However the students had no input in the directives coming from the government and had to follow as stated by the university authority.

In university as a market enterprise the university is focused on having a standing on the competitive market level. As such KU has come up with new innovation in terms of programs and infrastructure, currently there are 14 schools offering physical sciences, social sciences, business studies and environmental sciences. To advertise the programs KU has formed outreach programs through which they use the student leaders to go into the community in a way to advertise the programs offered in the institutions. Through KUSA the student leaders visit various high schools under the banner of KU so as to talk to the students on the courses offered and the required qualifications.

There was also the KUSA Assessment Management Committee which assessed the way in which the university administration is working and the disbursement of the funds from the students. The findings also revealed the student leaders monitored the lecturers in the way they carried out their duties. Since they are the consumers of the product (education) they have to be satisfied with what they are offered. So quality of what they are provided with was also an important factor student leaders focused.

### **6.3 The role student leaders in university governance**

It is important in any given responsibility for one to understand what their expectations are. From the findings, the student leaders were satisfied with the role they played. They also mentioned that in ensuring the issues affecting the students in connection with the university were taken care of, they viewed themselves as being a representative of the student body.

In the institutional autonomy student represent the views of other students but they are conceived as minors or junior members (Luescher-Mamashela, 2012 ;) This concurs with the findings of Menon, 2005. The student leaders felt that in some decisions they were just like rubber stamps to indicate they were part of the decision. Like in the case of organizing the regional games, the student representative had very minimal contribution to the way in which the running of the championship was to be done. They acknowledged this could be due to the

magnitude of the event or the level at which they are in the chain of the administration. Also the student leaders were seen to play the role of academic evaluators. Even though their impact is very minimal at this level since most of the decisions are made by the senior academics, as consumers of education they have to be involved in the deliberation affecting them.

As mentioned in the analytical framework, the major role of the student leaders is that of being a representative, they represent the voice of the student body before the university administrators. University being site of democratic citizenship, student representation is a means by which to inculcate democratic values and exercise democratic practice (Luescher – Mamashela, 2012; Boland 2005; Bergan 2004). The role of the student leaders in the university governance is that of a stakeholder they should therefore have a say in matters of the university relating to their lives. The interests of all the stakeholders should be given equal consideration.

In KU it was found that only the KUSA President and the Secretary- General attend the senate meetings, where they represent the student body. The number of student represented in these committees is wanting. The study revealed that the students felt the authorities need to open up to the students and allocate the student leaders more slots in the committees. Currently the ratio of student representation in these committees is 1:10. When decisions are made through voting it would be very difficult for the student to win for there is no equal membership.

The students pointed to the variations in the effectiveness of their representation in the different departments. It was found that the student leaders were more effective on matters which were less important. Major decisions were made by the senior management. It is usually the fact because the university authorities feel that involving students in issues such as quality control to be inefficient and inefficient because students are not professional evaluators or curriculum developers. The students therefore can be inefficient but through voicing of their demands the university authorities can be in a position to see the loop holes in the administration.

Whatever role the student leaders take is a representation of the needs of the student body. In this model student leader as legitimate stakeholders represents the rest of the students in the committees. In these committees they are able to air the views of the students to the

authorities. The students are members of the university community and so they have a right to equal representation in matters affecting the students directly. The role of student leaders can be seen in the way in which they mediate between the student body and the administrators for the information to move from top to bottom and vice versa. For information to reach the intended destination appropriately there should be in between connection, which in this study is displayed by the role the student leaders play in the shared responsibility.

In the governance of KU, as a market enterprise it was found that student leaders are also overseers. The students, within the KUSA governing council, have a committee known as The KUSA Assessment Management Committee(KUSAAMC), which oversees the way in which the university administrators manage the university especially in the disbursement of resources to student affairs. Students being consumers have a right to information about money got from fee paid since it originates from them. From the consumerist perspective students also oversees the quality of good that they are provided with so that they get the value of their money.

#### **6.4 The value of involving student leaders in governance**

There is value in involving the students in the governance of university. This can be to the institution and to the individual student leader. In Olsen model the student leaders are members of the university community, findings indicated the students felt they were the university and so without them there can be no university. It is important to have students in the governance of the university because they are the link between administration and the student body.

The role of the university is to transmit knowledge to the student and a working relationship is developed between the students and the senior managers. The student leaders also felt that their involvement made them to be more responsible and confident. Zhao & Kuh, (2004), stated that involving student leaders in activities such as first year seminars, internships and mentoring enabled them to succeed both in academic and social integration.

The students also felt that by involving them in the affairs of the university, confrontations between them and the university administration is reduced. This helps to ensure stability and continuity in the university leadership, having students as partners helped advertise the university in the event of sustained peace. As stakeholders being involved in decisions

making, the students welcome policy changes without having to run battles with the university.

The findings indicate they managed to convince the administration to introduce shuttle buses to carry students to and from the satellite campuses within the city and also the internet services within the university. Through dialogue they were able to make the university administrators to extend the deadline for course registration. Issues are not forced down their throats; they participate as an internal constituency. The student leaders were satisfied with the role they play. A good example was when the proposals they forwarded to the administration were implemented.

The study revealed that involving students in decision making helped them develop self-concept and divergent thinking (see May, 2009; Pascarelli & Terenzini, 2005). The students' actions in the university help them prepare for commitments later in life in the larger society.

KU as an organization competes in the stiff market oriented enterprise. Students as consumers are concerned about the products they are provided with, so the university is forced to come up with new innovation for the satisfaction of its customers. Involvement of student leaders facilitates the evaluation of the curricula and the teaching process (see Menon, 2005). There is direct feedback from the consumers. And in so doing this leads to creation of alumni who end up being ambassadors in the wider society. It is through a shared involvement at every level of the university structure that student may succeed in identifying themselves with their institution and in attaining their highest levels of academic and personal development (Boland, 2005).

For any organization to succeed a refurbishment of its system must be done. To improve on the student governance, emphasis should be put in the administrative system. The student leaders should be elected through competitive election as was evidenced in KU.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The study focused on the involvement of student leaders in the governance of university. The study was guided by the following questions: how the students participated in the decision making, what roles they played in the decision making process, and the benefit of involving student leaders in the decision making.

### **Relevance of Olsen Steering Model to this study**

Olsen four steering model of the university organization and governance was relevant to this study as it focused on the governance of an institution such as KU which was the main theme of the study. Even though the models focus on governance not all could be more effective in student governance of the university.

Student leaders as members of the ‘community of scholars’ have minimal contribution in decision making. The senior academicians have the final say in decisions made about the learning and teaching, student leaders are considered to be inefficient in matters of the curriculum. However by being members of the university their contribution can be felt in the identification of the inadequacies in the programs and teaching. The model can be said to be relevant for student leaders to be involved in university governance in KU.

The representative model is the most relevant for student governance. Student leaders as legitimate stakeholders get their post through competitive elections and as such they get the opportunity to be members of the administrative committees within the university where they represent the needs of the students. However the demands of the students can only be implemented if they are in line with the university policy. In KU the university authority relied on the student leaders to get information from the student body, and also to pass information to the students.

The university being a national instrument model the participation of the student leaders in governance is quite limited. In this model the power of the state is paramount the students have to follow the set rules. The student leaders can not therefore make a major impact to the university authorities.

The students as consumers of education have more say in the market-enterprise. In this model the students are more concerned with the knowledge that is passed to them whether it is of

good quality or not. The students also pay for the services they get, they therefore need to know how this money is utilized. The power of the state is minimized here the students take centre stage, this makes it more relevant to this study

### **Implications of the study**

Participation of student leaders in the governance of the university is very crucial. It through their involvement that the university can be at peace, if ignored they tend to act negatively. By empowering the students, the positive image of the university is reflected because they are the ambassadors. For students to be involved effectively in decision making in KU, the following factors need to be taken into consideration;

- It is evident that the student leaders were concerned about the time of meetings that tended to interfere with their classes. The academic achievement is more important when they complete their university studies. This suggest to the university administrators to adjust the time of the meetings so that the students can be part of the decisions made.
- Consultation is one of the areas that the student leaders felt they had made a breakthrough, but the administrators both top and middle need to be more accessible to enable the student leaders to improve on consultation. This when their impact can be felt if they present their proposals in a more articulate way. The student leaders are thus viewed as partners and not just as source of information.
- Student leaders require to be equipped with skills to enable them execute their obligations. This suggest to the administrators to provide for student leaders to visit countries or universities with success stories so as to enable the students to give their roles a regional or an international view in decision making.
- Equal representation is a factor the student leaders were concerned about. There is need to take this into consideration during composition of the committees. As for now it is not possible for student views to pass during voting when the membership ratio is 1:10.
- Elections of student leaders are influenced by the political standing of the country of forming alliances. The university can invited guest speakers to advice them to move

from ethnic alliances. University as center for learning democratic rights,the student leaders can set an example to the society.

### **Further research**

This study focused on the role student leaders in the governance of the university. Further research could focus on areas such as; a comparison of student governance in the public and the private universities. Another interesting area could be the effect of student leadership on their academic performance.



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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: Letter for field work from University of Oslo



**UNIVERSITETET I OSLO**  
DET UTDANNINGSVITENSKAPELIGE FAKULTET

To whom it may concern

Department of Education  
P.O. Box 1092 Blindern  
N-0317 Oslo

Date: 21.12.2010  
Your ref.:  
Our ref.: kristi.barcus@ped.uio.no

Visiting address:  
Sem Sælandsvei 7, Helga Eng's Building, 5<sup>th</sup> floor  
Telephone: +47 22 84 44 75  
Fax: +47 22 85 42 50  
www.uv.uio.no

### ASSISTANCE IN THE CONDUCTION OF FIELD-WORK

This is to confirm that the student, Nereah Atieno Obiero, born 25.04.1960, is a second year student in the Master programme in Higher Education at the Department of Educational Research at the University of Oslo, Norway.

In the second year our students are required to write a Master thesis of 50 to 80 pages. The field-work may incorporate interviews with educational practitioners and decision-makers, class-room observation and documentary analysis. The type of data gathered should of course be discussed with the relevant authorities. It is our hope that the work produced by the student will not only benefit her in her academic career but also be of use to the future of Kenya.

Nereah Atieno Obiero will be conducting her research in Kenya during the month of January 2011. We kindly ask you to give her all possible assistance during her field-work.

Yours sincerely,

Kristi Barcus  
HEEM/HE Administrative Coordinator  
Senior Executive Officer  
Department of Education  
University of Oslo  
tel.: +47 22 85 53 56



UNIVERSITY OF OSLO  
Department of Education  
Box 1092 Blindern  
N-0317 Oslo

## APPENDIX 2: Authorization letter from Kenyatta University



### KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

#### OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC)

Tel: (+254-20) 8710901-19 Ext 57481  
Fax: (+254-20) 8711380  
Website: [www.ku.ac.ke](http://www.ku.ac.ke)

P.O. Box 43844-00100  
Nairobi, Kenya  
E-mail: [dvc-acad@ku.ac.ke](mailto:dvc-acad@ku.ac.ke)

REF:KU/DVCACAD/GEN/9/DF

25<sup>TH</sup> January 2011,

OBIERO NEREAH ATIENO,  
C/O BEATRICE BUNYASI,  
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION.



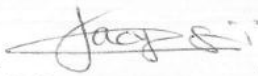
#### RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is drawn to your letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

This is to inform you that your request to carry out research on "*The role of students in the governance of the University. An implication of a shared leadership.*" in Kenyatta University has been granted.

You are, however, advised to liaise with the Director Institute for Research, Science and Technology for guidance on the data collection procedure and direction.

Thank you.

For 

**PROF. JOHN OKUMU**  
**DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC)**

### **APPENDIX 3: Interview guide for student leaders**

Position held:

Sex of the informant:

Creation of rapport between the researcher and the student

1. What is your understanding of leadership?
2. How did you get your position?
3. Have you had any training for being a leader?
4. How has being a leader affected your studies?
5. How do you balance your time between studies and student leadership?
6. Are you a member of a committee or board where academic and administrative staffs are represented?
7. Are your views always considered in these committees? And are there occasions when you felt your views were disregarded by the university?
8. How often are you consulted?
9. How would you describe the communication between the students and university authority?
10. What are your roles in the decision making in the university?
11. In your opinion what are the benefits of involving students in decision making in the university?
12. How best can students participate in decision making?
13. Is there any other information you would like to add?

Thank you for the cooperation and assistance!